

Noah Barker

Hallucinations

Opening: September 11th, 2026

Until November 7th 2026

In the 1960s scientists were pursuing more intelligent machines. They sought to replicate the human vision system in computers. This vision required memory in which data extracted from images would supplement new ones the computer was exposed to. If it recognized what it saw, it could learn. By the 1980s, computers had the ability to increase the definition of a digital image from the catalog of like types it stored. Part document, part fabrication, the resulting images were called hallucinations. Today, the term remains in use to describe large language models that are said to hallucinate quotes that have not been written from books that have not been published. What a computer doesn't know, it makes up.

One origin of systems thinking is the desire to understand human self-knowledge through the external expansion of the senses. For example, lenses are the apparatus through which we came to grasp the technics of the eye through the study of the cosmos. Likewise, the computer in the twentieth century was both the tool and model of studying the mind. Unlike the fantasy of unlimited computational power, a single human cannot know or remember everything. People use models to overcome specialized knowledge to communicate, for instance, a history of finance or the future of the environment. Models allow for abstractions rather than a granular account of events and are fundamental in construing complex systems as if they are stable structures.

The instability of the mind, madness, has long been viewed as a back end to better knowing the structure of cognition. Like a model, scientists of the 1950s believed temporarily induced states of schizophrenia would systematize its study. Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) was administered as a psychotomimetic drug in clinical settings. However, rather than madness, patients described the hallucinations as an expanded sense of self. While therapeutic studies were also pursued clinically and recreationally, others saw the suggestive state of the dosed as an opportunity to reprogram the cerebral organ as if it were a computer.

Works, in order of appearance:

Claude

1972/2025

Claude E. Shannon and Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Savage and Signal," session recorded at Communication, Cognition, and Culture: A Summer Institute, July 1972, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences Records (SC1055), Dept. of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University Libraries, Palo Alto, Calif.

7 minutes

Midnight Climax (account, agencies, agents, artifacts)

2026

Brass, hardware (wood, steel)

30.5 x 25.5 x 25.5 cm; with hardware: 183 x 40.5 x 51 cm

Untitled

2026

Blotter paper on drafting film

95 x 89 cm; framed: 111 x 104 x 4 cm

Midnight Climax

1955/2024

Two-way mirror on laminated birch with décor by Maurice Sands Interiors (African textile, framed floral picture, standing light, typewriter, side table) under retainer of George White, Bureau of Narcotics, expensed to MK-ULTRA Subproject 42, examined and approved by Sydney Gottlieb, Chemical Division, Central Intelligence Agency

250 x 300 x 100 cm

Idea of Ideas

2026

Stainless steel, acrylic

112 x 46 x 46 cm